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ABSTRACT

This paper explores radical critical theory, which questions the most fundamental assumptions of traditional family sociology by posing alternative ways of uncovering the realities of marriage. The first section provides a background in radical-critical theory, while the second section attempts to locate the radical-critical perspective within the mainstream of sociological theories currently applied in family sociology. The third section offers a critical overview of the historical development of family sociology. In the final section the substantive applications of radical critical theory are discussed. The conclusion offers both theoretical and methodological guidelines for a radical-critical theory of family sociology. (Author/JAC)

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Rethinking Family Sociology from a Radical-Critical Perspective: Applications and Implications

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TOWARD A RADICAL-CRITICAL THEORY OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marie Withers Osmond

> Sociology (and here we refer specifically to family sociology) is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of concensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other."
>
> Geertz (1973:29)

The goal of this paper is to explicate a perspective, termed radical-theory theory, that questions the most fundamental assumptions of traditional family sociology. Basically, radical-critics claim that family sociology, one of the oldest areas in the discipline, reflects its subject matter (rather than explains it) and, as a consequence, constructs a deeply conservative sociological approach that limits its contribution to sociology and serves to justify the status quo in society.*

Radical-critical theory is virtually unexplored in American family sociology. Its origins are primarily European and its proponents are largely from academic areas outside the sheltered boundaries of family sociology. The author embarked into this foreign territory as a result of nagging dissatisfactions with contemporary family theory and research methodology: concerns about our preoccupation with theory constructed on the basis of mountains of data that had not, themselves, been validated; concerns about our theoretical schisms and endless debates; and, concerns about our narrow focus on only the interior of the American middle-class family.

The paper, in essence, is an account of a journey into a "new" and quite irreverant theoretical viewpoint that questions our traditional questions and, also, goes beyond sheer critique to pose alternative ways of uncovering the realities of marriage and the family. There is no intent to offer radical-critical theory as a replacement for other models. However, there is sufficient evidence that radical-critical theory offers a unique perspective that will generate considerable theory and research as well as debate. Thus, the purpose of the paper is to offer the student a compelling alternative to what has been a relatively restricted range of theoretical approaches to the study of marriage and the family.**

The paper is organized in four sections. The first section is designed to provide a background in radical-critical theory. Unlike our familiar theoretical frameworks, the radical-critical model has received no description of founders and

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* It is recognized that there are individual exceptions to the general picture of family sociology depicted here. The purpose is to critique the broad field of family sociology and not to extol or blame those individual members who are attempting to develop the area today.

** The paper is offered with some trepidation. Perhaps it will prove unpalatable to both radical-critics (who may view it as too weak in its criticism) and to family sociologists (who may see it as irreverant and/or irrevelant). However, it is addressed primarily to students (in the broad sense of all those wanting to know a variety of approaches to a subject) and to those who believe in the possibility and potentiality of radical change in our science and in our society.

history, no elaboration of concepts and assumptions, in the family literature. Thus, a basic introduction is necessary to familiarize the reader with theorists, assumptions, etc. that reappear when the paper turns directly to theoretical applications to the substantive area of family sociology.

The second section attempts to locate the radical-critical perspective within the mainstream of sociological theories currently applied in family sociology. A four-fold typology of social theories is offered which distinguishes them on the basis of two major dimensions: the subjective versus objective dimension; and the radical change versus regulation dimension.

Section three offers a critical overview of the historical development of family sociology. Family theory is traced, first to Comte, Durkheim, and Spencer, and then to the heritage of the American, University of Chicago School. The published views on marriage and the family of Small, Ward, Thomas, and Burgess are critiqued. Ogburn and Nimkoff's "institutional approach" is also examined. The historical overview leads to a summary of twelve basic theoretical assumptions that constitute the legacy of sociological theory of the family. These assumptions are then critiqued from a radical-critical view.

Section four concerns substantive applications of radical-critical theory. Radical-critics contend that we must go beyond the claim that a certain theory is useful for understanding marriage and the family. The persuasiveness of the claim is in its demonstration. Five substantive topics, in family sociology, are delineated as examples of the application of a radical-critical approach. These topics are as follows: family history as related to the assumption of a "public-private" dichotomy; the politics of sexuality; demystification of motherhood and housework; the dialectic of patriarchy and capitalism; and, the association of the family and stratification systems in reproducing social inequality. For each of these subjects, the traditional approach in family sociology is outlined and the radical-critical alternative is documented with a summary overview of examples from the literature

The paper concludes with suggested quidelines, both theoretical and methodological, for a radical-critical theory of family sociology.

Emergence of Radical-Critical Sociology

This paper deals with a number of prespectives whose integrative characteristics are the radical critique of society and of "establishment" sociology. One difficulty in explicating the approach is the diversity of theories that are currently labeled radical or critical. A commonly shared intellectual tradition of social criticism, of course, lies in Marxism. However, as Mayhew (1980) points out, the varieties of Marxist sociology number possibly thousands. Also, radical sociology should not be taken only as a euphemism for Marxist sociology. As Flacks and Turkel (1978:194) assert, radical sociology can be as critical of certain varieties of Marxism as it is of "bourgeois" or "academic" sociology. A primary distinction, among these various approaches appears to be that between "critical" and "radical" theory. Both theories attempt to develop a sociology of radical change but they do so from somewhat divergent viewpoints. The critical, more "humanist," approach emphasizes the subjective aspects of Marxism with a primary analytic focus on social ideology or belief systems. The radical, more "structuralist," camp advocates objective approaches and concentrates primarily on political-economic systems.* The following subsections trace the backgrounds of the two perspectives.

"Critical theory" has a relatively specific connotation and refers to the variety of Marxism originating in the 1920s when Lukacs and Gramsci revived interest in the subjectivist interpretations of Marx's early work. The young Marx, very influenced by Hegelian idealist philosophy, sought to develop an emancipatory theory which emphasized how individuals, through self-consciousness, could create and change their society. Marx's central premise had to do with the "alienation" of the individual. In essense, he saw capitalist society as dominating human experience and objectifying the individual's essential nature (Marx, 1844). Lukacs emphasized this early humanistic, more subjective side of Marxism (see Burrell and Morgan, 1979, and Martindale, 1981, for discussion of both Lukacs and Gramsci). His aim was to develop a theory of radical change which underscored the role of the proletariat, and particularly its class consciousness, in the revolution against capitalist society. Thus, Lukacs stressed the concept of "totality": the tenet that no partial aspect of social life and no isolated phenomenon can be comprehended unless it is related to the historical whole, the social system conceived as a global entity.

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*The distinction between subjective and objective Marxism can be traced to the publication in French in 1966 and Britain in 1969 of Althusser's For Marx. Althusser saw an "epistemological break" in Marx's work. The young Marx, influenced by Hegelian idealism, stressed the domination of human consciousness by the ideological superstructures. In his later work, Marx moved from the idealist perspective to a more realist interpretation of the nature of society. Particularly in his work with Engels, Marx focused on the materialist (economic) base of society. Burrell and Morgan (1979) label these two camps "radical humanism" and "radical structuralism." Burawoy (1978), following Althusser, terms the positions "expressive" and "structured." Mullins (1973) distinction of "radicals" and "criticals" is quite similar to the classificiation in this paper. It should be noted that while Gouldner (1980) emphasizes two orientations within Marxist sociology (which he calls "scientific Marxism" versus "Marxism as critique"), he insists that these do not reflect different periods in Marx's life but rather that they represent contradictory tendencies that were always present in Marx's theory.

Gramsci, likewise, was convinced that ideology was the key both to social change and stable social order. According to Gramsci, domination in capitalism rested, in large part, within the people's consciousness through "ideological hegemony." He maintained that the ruling class always seeks to legitimate its power through the creation (and perpetuation) of a belief system which emphasizes the need for order, authority, and discipline. Gramsci argued that it is first in the family and then in the schools and workplaces that capitalism develops and increases the invisible power of the ruling class by infiltrating the consciousness of the individual.

Members of the German, "Frankfort school" of critical theory were influenced by the work of Marx, Lukacs, and Gramsci. The Institute for Social Research was established in Frankfort in 1923 and has housed such social scientists as Adorno, Fromm, Horkheimer, Lowenthal, Marcuse, and Habermas (for a history of the school, see Jay, 1973). The original effort of the Frankfort School can be seen as an attempt to account for the failure of the Western European proletariat to become revolutionary. Traditional Marxism (the late, or mature Marx and, particularly the works of Marx and Engels) appeared to rely too heavily on the concept of "mode of production" (the economic base of society). What was needed was an explanation of how ideological, cultural, and psychological (the superstructure) factors deflected the workers' class consciousness from the idea of revolution. A union of Marxism and Freudianism seemed to offer insight into the problems of individual submissiveness, repression, and conformity (i.e., insight into how societal constraints are internalized). Marx's historical materialism would offer a critical theory of society and psychoanalysis, a critical theory of the subject. The critical theorists' emphasis on human consciousness characterizes the perspective as a "subjective" approach to social theory. This capsule sum of critical theory is, of course, oversimplistic. Most reviewers agree that there is no "one" critical theory but rather the critical theories of the individual members of the Frankfort school (cf. Tar, 1977:204). Currently, the more pertinent theorists are Horkheimer (the original director at the school) Marcuse, and Habermas.

"Radical sociology," sometimes termed Marxist structuralism or neo-Marxism, is identified with Marx's later work, particularly Capital. Here Marx moved away from philosophical interpretations to analyses of the political economy of capitalism. His emphasis changed to a focus on "crises, contradictions, structures" rather than the concepts of "alienation, consciousness, critique" stressed in his earlier work. Basically, Marx's model of society consists of two structures. The "substructure" consists of the economic base of the society. The "superstructure" refers to non-economic structures within the society such as the State, mass culture, epistemology, ideology, etc. Radical sociology concentrates on the substructure of society and sees the superstructure, basically, as being determined by the nature of economic production. Critical theory, as discussed above, places a primary emphasis on the ideological characteristics of the superstructure. One of the goals of radical sociology is to provide a critique of the societal status quo. Equally important is the aim toward radical social change. Analysis concerns the interrelationship of structures within society. These interrelationships are viewed as containing contradictions which generate political and economic crises that eventually lead to the breakdown of the mode of production and its related social formations. It is important to note that the idea of contradiction is central to the radical's explanation of social change.* In contrast to the perspective of critical theory,

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*Different theorists tend to emphasize different contradictions. One common example is the contradiction in the capitalist pursuit of private profit by means of

the radicals place less emphasis upon the role of the individual. Common to both camps, however, is the vision of human liberation from the forms of domination seen as basic characteristics of capitalist industrial society (see Burrell and Morgan, 1979, Chapter 10, for a discussion of "radical structuralism").

The position of radical sociology is, perhaps, best illustrated in the work of Althusser, a French Marxist scholar (cf. Althusser, 1969, and Althusser and Balibar, 1970). Althusser's perspective can be interpreted as a reaction against the Hegelian Marxism of the Frankfort school and an effort to develop an alternative in the tradition of a materialist Marxism. For Althusser, individuals do not make history; it is made by the specific interrelationship of structures at a given historic time. The concept of "totality" is viewed as a structured totality (as opposed to the Hegelian totality of a single dominating principle or spirit). Althusser's structural totality consists of four "practices": economic; political; ideology; and scientific. While the economic is seen as the most determinative practice (i.e., it defines the contributions of the different parts of society and thus the relations among them), at any given historic time each of the practices have relative independence despite the possible domination of one practice over the others. Althusser calls this a "structure in domination." Further, any historical event represents the outcome of the complex interrelationship among practices.

In essence, Althusser rejects economic determinism for a multi-causal theory of history. For example, from such a structuralist perspective, the family would be viewed as performing a number of necessary functions for the capitalist economy: reproducing labor power; preparing youth for the alienating experience of work; socializing children; maintaining women as a reserve labor force; consuming; etc. However, the family not only changes with the changing requirements of the capitalist economy, but it also has a structure of its own and, therefore, a relative independence in carrying out its activities (see Burawoy, 1978, for a lucid discussion of Althusser's notion of structural and expressive totalities). For Althusser, social change depends on the type and extent of contradictions in the structural totality. Some contradictions can be antagonistic and their interrelationships will produce sweeping social change; other contradictions can be absorbed by the system. Thus, revolution will depend upon particular conjunctions of contradictions and structures in domination. Also, change is uneven: it is the combination of the disparate histories of the separate practices. Since these practices move with their own relative independence, revolutionary situations (conjunctures) can be unpredictable. Thus, the focus on "times of crisis." The role of individuals, as political activists, receives little emphasis in Althusser's work. In sum, Althusser argues for an historical analysis of the interrelationship of social structures (and their relative dominance) as related to specific historical events.*

In concluding this brief review of the background of critical and radical theories, it is pertinent to note how very recently these perspectives entered

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equitable exchange principles. This allows the system to ignore all legitimate needs which are not readily turned into private gain. In turn, these unmet needs provoke antagonism, conflict, etc.

*For further discussion of Althusser's approach see Burawoy (1978), Callinicos (1976), and Glucksmann (1974). My interpretation owes much to Burrell and Morgan (1979).

American sociology. The "radical movement" in American sociology, which began in the 1960s, acknowledged C. Wright Mills (who was more influenced by Veblen than by Marx) as founder.* Mills rejected both the abstract theorizing of Parsons and the bureaucratic ethos of the survey research institute. He called for the study of large-scale sociological problems that would interrelate the individual, social structure, and history. The first two decades of radical sociology in America were characterized by attacks on mainstream sociology. Particularly, during the 1960s, sociology's neglect of the issues of power, protest, and ideology laid fertile groundwork for the radical critiques of social theories that appeared biased toward system-maintenance. Gouldner, a former functionalist, turned his theoretical acumen into barbs that relentlessly dissected functionalist analysis, and left no doubt that he had joined the cause of the radical movement. Gouldner's presidential address at the annual meeting of The Society for the Study of Social Problems ("The Myth of a Value-Free Sociology," 1962) and his best-known book, The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology (1970) set the tone and the targets for American radical sociology.

In brief, the origins of radical sociology in America were: first, a rebellion against the values of establishment sociology and its blindness to power relations; second, academics' (graduate students and faculty) participation in contemporary social movements (such as anti-war, black power, and women's liberation); and, very currently, the American rediscovery of intellectual Marxism in the forms of both critical theory and radical structuralism (cf. Stein and Vidich, 1963; Birnbaum, 1971; Colfax and Roach, 1971; Wells, 1978; Lehmann and Young, 1978; and Connerton, 1976). American radical sociology has been criticised as only negative and polemical (cf. Wrong, 1974). One of the goals of this paper is to examine potential substantive contributions rather than simply document critiques of family sociology.

Theoretical Schisms

Sociology has long been preoccupied with debates over different combinations of theoretical and methodological assumptions about the nature of social life and how best it might be studied. Also, it has become somewhat of a tradition among social theorists to attempt to organize their arguments into some type of model (typology or cross-classificatory scheme) to delineate the major schisms among existing theories (cf. Martindale, 1981:622).** It is not the intention of this chapter to enter the polemical arena of what theories constitute the major paradigms of contemporary sociology. It does appear heuristic to attempt to locate the radical-critical perspectives within the mainstream of sociological theories currently applied to family sociology. Thus, Table 1 presents an analytic "map," or classificatory device, to locate social theories according to their shared and divergent underlying assumptions.***

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*For a thorough discussion of Mills as the leading voice of radical opposition to the sociological establishment, see Binns, 1977, Chapter 6.

**Eckberg and Hill (1979) review twelve such organizational schemes. See also Ritzer's (1981) reply as one of the twelve reviewed by Eckberg and Hill.

***The classification presented here relies greatly on the insightful elaboration of four conflicting sociological paradigms in organizational analysis, by Burrell and Morgan (1979).

Table 1 -- about here

The most basic schism in views of social reality concerns the very nature of the phenomenon to be studied: the objective-subjective split on the horizontal axis of Table 1. Is the reality, under investigation, external to the individual, objective, a given that imposes itself on individuals from without? Or, is the reality a product of individual consciousness, subjective, a creature of individual cognition? This debate is variously labeled, all having to do with the assumptions that follow from each position: holism-elementarism; realism-nominalism; scientism-humanism; nomothetic-hermenutic; objective-subjective. As shown in Table 1, this is the basic split between critical (humanist) and structuralist perspectives.*

From the basic position of subjectivist or objectivist, other assumptions follow. Here these assumptions are stated as polar extreme positions, and, in Table 1, the various theories can be located on a continuum of the polarity. The extreme subjectivist view of social reality also subscribes to nominalism; voluntarism; ideographic understanding; and anti-positivistic method. The nominalist assumption is that the individual is the primary reality in human social life; organizations, from small groups to society, are something created by individuals, society is the extension of individuals. The assumption of voluntarism views the individual as autonomous; free-willed; purposive and goal-directed. From the ideographic position, one can only understand the social world by gaining first-hand knowledge of the subject studied; by analysis of subjective accounts obtained by "getting inside" situations and allowing the subject to unfold its characteristics during the research process; by "verstehen." The anti-positivistic viewpoint, similarly, views social behavior as essentially relativistic and to be understood from the point of view of the individuals directly involved in the subject of study; rejects the standpoint of an "objective observer" as the way to understand human behavior; questions the ideals of scientific objectivity and value neutrality in social research; and strongly objects to the search for "laws" or underlying "universals" in social life.

An extreme objectivist view of social reality, on the other hand, posits: realism; determinism; nomothetic understanding; and positivistic method. The realist assumption is that the social world exists independently of individuals; it has an objective reality; the individual is created by society; society is an entity sui generis--greater than and different from the sum of its parts. From a deterministic perspective, the individual and social behavior are determined by the situation or environment; human experience is a product of the environment; humans are conditioned by their external circumstances. From a nomothetic viewpoint, the scientific endeavor is to focus on the analysis (taking the ground rules of the natural science) of relationships and regularities among the various elements which comprise the social world; at its most extreme, to search for universal laws which explain and govern the observed reality. The positivist approach to research seeks to apply methods derived from the natural sciences to the study of the social world; assumes that the growth of knowledge is a cumulative process in which new ideas are added and false hypotheses are eliminated; endorses "scientific objectivity," the rigid separation of the observer and the facts observed.

*Other family theorists, who have concentrated on critical theory, view this split as one between "positivistic" and "interpretive" theory (Paolucci and Bubolz, 1980).

In attempting to locate radical-critical perspectives relative to traditional sociological theories, the second major schism concerns the approach to social change: the regulation versus radical change split on the vertical axis of Table 1 (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:16-19; Martindale, 1981:622 terms this the "right and left wing" of social theory). This schism represents a much more extreme polarity than the traditional order-conflict debate. As presented in Table 1, when compared with radical-critical approaches, the majority of mainstream sociological theories are relatively more concerned with social regulation. The extreme positions of this debate can be outlined as follows.

The sociology of regulation is concerned with: the status quo; social order; consensus; social integration; cohesion/solidarity; and, actuality. The theoretical goal is to provide explanations of social order/organization. The basic questions are directed at why society is maintained; why it holds together; what social forces prevent the Hobbesian version of "war of all against all." In its need to understand the status quo, it directs attention to what remains unchanged. The characteristic view of functional interdependence of parts assumes a basic compatibility among the various elements of social structure. Functional interdependence also implies homogeneity, equilibrium, and essentially convergent social forces. The work of Durkheim is most illustrative of a sociology of regulation perspective.

At the opposite extreme, the basic concern is to understand (and promote) radical social change. The emphasis is on: radical change; structural conflict; modes of domination; contradiction; emancipation; and, potentiality. The emphasis is on control of (rather than adaption to) the environment. The characteristic view of contradiction assumes a basic incompatibility among various elements of the social structure. Contradiction also implies heterogeneity, dialectic, and essentially antagonistic and divergent social forces. There is an explicit concern with human emancipation from social structures which limit human potentials for development. At its most extreme, it appears visionary, and utopian in positing alternatives to the status quo. The writings of Marx offer the clearest example of a theory of radical change.

In sum, Table 1 shows the major cleavage between the critical-radical perspectives and traditional sociological theories as one on the radical change versus regulation dimension. The major schism within the critical-radical positions is along the subjective versus objective dimension. Critical theory, as discussed earlier, derives from the German idealist tradition, and attempts to develop a sociology of radical change from a subjectivist perspective. While the critical theorists focus upon human consciousness as the basis for their critique of society, the radical structuralists emphasize structural relationships from a realist, objectivist theoretical position. While there is considerable debate both within and between critical and radical structuralist schools, the disagreements do not appear to include differences in "micro-macro" perspectives nor divisions on the merits of positivism.

The Micro-Macro Issue. Here micro-sociology is equated with social-psychology. The individual is the unit of analysis and the goal is to "interpret" (explain) "human behavior" (e.g., attitudes, values, motives, experiences). Macro-sociology, on the other hand, takes the social system as the unit of analysis and asks how the emergence, or stability, or change of this system explains social phenomena. The system under analysis may range from small groups to families to communities and on up to society, itself. Macro-sociology does not ask how does the behavior

of individuals explain social phenomena (see Mayhew 1981a and 1981b). In essence, my claim is that both critical theory and radical structuralism attempt to explain individuals and institutions in terms of their interrelationships within society as a whole. Both camps emphatically underscore the importance of understanding the historical totality: the objective and subjective worlds which characterize a given epoch (the critical theorists tending to emphasize the subjective world and the radical structuralists, the objective world). In sum, at their most basic level, both critical theory and radical structuralism tend to be macro-sociology.*

The Positivism Issue. It is not plausible to make a general statement about a stance on positivism in radical-critical theory.** One purpose of this paper is to provide several examples of substantive applications of a radical-critical approach to family sociology. From these applications it is apparent that some radical-critics are more positivistic in their approach than are others. Inasmuch as they proceed deductively from certain ideas and tenets and arrive at certain conclusions which they attempt to relate to the concrete world, they are positivists.

However, it should be emphasized that radical-critical sociologists are not empiricists. Here the stance ranges from cautious to negative. Empiricism draws conclusions about the concrete world on the basis of induction. It treats the world of appearances as the only world. A primary goal of radical-critical sociology is to try to penetrate appearances: to try to demonstrate that what appears as common sense, as natural and necessary, really rests on the existence of conditions that are socially produced.

Thus, radical-critical sociologists are dismayed by the traditional emphasis on survey research which they see as "methodological individualism" (cf. Gerhardt, 1980; Birnbaum, 1971; Colfax and Roach, 1971; O'Neill, 1974; Stein and Vidich, 1963). They are equally critical of the logical positivism of theory construction: the goal of arranging existing generalizations (often derived from survey research) into axiomatic systems to derive a set of laws matching those of the natural sciences (e.g., Zetterberg, 1966). In essence, they claim that this type of "scientific sociology" which purports to analyze the existing society, only mystifies it. The rhetoric of "measurement" and "variables" is predicated on the assumption that human society can be analyzed in terms of objective facts and laws. This ignores the historical nature of society: i.e., that this particular social system is qualitatively different than those that preceded it and has, itself, only a limited historical existence. Moreover, it appears blind to the fact that any study of society is, itself, located within society and so, necessarily, both affects and is affected by that society. To the extent that sociologists avoid these problems, they actually

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*See Bottomore (1975) for support and Shalin (1978) for opposition to this position. Individual theorists, of course, vary in their applications of micro and macro perspectives.

**It is not the intention of this chapter to enter a philosophy of science debate about the nature of positivism or its alternatives. For discussion of these issues see, for example: Martindale, 1981, Paolucci and Bubolz, 1980; Thomas, Kleber, and Galligan, 1980; Walls, 1979.

justify existing social relations and structure by making them appear "natural" and "eternal": they deny the possibility of alternative forms of relations and structures (Offe, 1977:4-5; Birnbaum, 1971:126-129).*

Legacy of Family Theory

While there have been a remarkable number of careful delineations of stages in the history of family sociology (from Komarovsky and Waller, 1945, to Thomas, Kleber, and Galligan, 1980), none of these has examined this history from a critical perspective. The aim, in this section, is to apply a critical approach to an understanding of the origins and growth of American family sociology; the role of ideology in theorizing; and any cycles which may have characterized the focii in theory and methods. This approach takes as its data the ideas of the specific men who developed family sociology and the specific collegial structures in which they worked. The analysis was guided by four major questions (each of which deserves far greater elaboration than space permits here); (1) Why is there no living legacy of family theory from the founding fathers of sociology?: (2) How did our American originators, the "liberal-reformists" of the Chicago school, view the family?; (3) What is the evidence that family sociology shifted, historically, from a structural-comparative approach to one based in social-psychology? (4) What were the basic theoretical assumptions (about the nature of the individual, society, social change, etc. and the family) that guided family sociology and how would a radical-critic view these assumtions?

The founding fathers of sociology, Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Spencer, etc., each focused at some time on the sociology of the family.** Why, then, does family sociology have no legacy, no current debate analogous to that in other areas of sociology as, for example, Marx's theory of surplus value or Weber's conceptualization of stratification? After examining the writings of our founders, the answer appears to be that their theories of the family are not only not heuristic but actually embarassing in the extent of their ideological bias. In the second half of the Nineteenth Century, the belief system in Western Europe emphasized the essential regulatory nature of the family (the final bastion of social order to Durkheim) and the natural and inevitable split between private and public spheres. Where these early social theorists could apply a relatively objective analysis to the public arena, they lapse into ideological reflection when they confront the family. Nowhere is this more apparent than in their treatment of women and women/family are virtually inseparable in their thinking.

Comte, of course, is well known for simultaneously putting women (and the family) on a moral pedestal while setting forth a rationalization for the intellectual inferiority of women. Spencer, from a biological determinist viewpoint,

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*For concrete outlines of a "radical methodology" see, for example, Barton, 1971; Fasola-Bologna, 1970; Szymanski, 1970.

**While Marx and Engels are certainly included among the founders of sociology, they are not considered separately in this section since the "Marxian" perspective pervades this entire paper. For a lucid discussion of Marx and Engels on the family, see Zaretsky (1976). For a debate on whether or not Marx and Engels contributed to family sociology, see Dotson, 1974, and Roach and Roach, 1975.

claimed that women represent an earlier arrest of human evolution that allows them to conserve their energies for reproduction (cf. volume 1, Domestic Institutions of his multi-volume Principles of Sociology, 1893). Spencer disparaged feminist claims to political liberties and rights by arguing that women's "natural place" within the home is a necessary complement to the competitive world of men (Rosaldo, 1980:402). To Durkheim, the function of marriage is to regulate the "life of passion": "marriage by the rule to which it submits passion, gives to man a moral base which increases his power of resistance. In assigning a certain object to desires, definite and unvariable, it prevents men from exasperating themselves in the pursuit of the ever new . . ." (quoted in Bynder, 1969). Durkheim viewed women as basically asocial beings: "her sensibility is rudimentary rather than highly developed. As she lives outside of community existence more than man, she is less penetrated by it; society is less necessary to her because she is less impregnated with sociability. She has few needs in this direction and satisfies them easily . . ." (in the English, 1951, translation of Suicide, 1897:215-216). These early social theorists never appear to ask why there is a split between private and public, family and society. They simply assumed that there are fundamental differences and, then, link these to their views of the "natural" roles of men and women in society. The very base of American sociology was strongly influenced by this perspective.

American family sociology originated in the first school of sociology at the University of Chicago. Here, Small, Ward, Thomas, and Burgess were colleagues at various times and presented relatively consensual views on marriage and the family. What is most impressive, from a critical viewpoint, is that while these scholars took a liberal-reformist stance on most social issues, they were extremely conservative on marriage and the family.

Albion Small (1854-1926) was the first head of a department of sociology in America, the founding editor of The American Journal of Sociology, and one of the early presidents of the American Sociological Society.* Small's major work was General Sociology (1905) and, in it, he emphasized that the family deserved serious academic study and status. The telling question, from the critical viewpoint, concerns why these early sociologists deemed it "important" to study the family. The answer is that the family is viewed as the basic system for social regulation. Small, for example, considered the family as the primary institutional means to achieve social stability. Small saw conflict (the collision of interests) as the basic pattern of human association. In keeping with his own ethical preferences, however, he went on to claim that conflict resolves itself into cooperation through socialization (Timasheff, 1957:65). In capsule, the early Chicago sociologists expected to eliminate the causes of "social problems"--their major focii--through proper socialization. Thus, Small viewed women as the basic instruments of social control. However, he emphasized that women's place is in the home; he opposed the extension of suffrage to women; and he avowed that women should not be "bread winners" (Deegan, 1981).

Lester Ward (1841-1913) was brought into the Chicago circle, to teach several summer courses, by Small. Ward, a paleontologist in the U.S. Geological Survey, studied Comte and Spencer and produced his two volume Dynamic Sociology (1883),

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*The society was subsequently renamed the American Sociological Association to avoid use of the group's initials (Deegan, 1981).

the first American book with "sociology" in its title. In 1906, Ward became the first president of the American Sociological Society, resigned his government position, and began teaching sociology at Brown University. Ward's sociology was basic American ideology. His leading principle was "meliorism": the improvement of social conditions through the application of scientific intelligence. He emphasized the goal of "meritocracy" (which he termed "sociocracy"): the recognition of "natural inequalities" and the abolishment of artificial ones (Martindale, 1981:85-87). Ward also presented a theory of the origins of the family. Marriage, he asserted, is a type of property relationship that arises out of the innate characteristics of men (egoistic desires for pleasure and possession) and women (passivity). The function of marriage is to preserve social order by preventing males from mutual destruction (see Schwendinger's, 1971, for an extended discussion of Ward's theory of marriage and family).

W. I. Thomas (1863-1947) was a graduate student at the University of Chicago and taught there from 1894-1918.* Thomas focused on individual behavior (the action of the individual in a social situation) and, especially, "adjustive" behavior (Timasheff, 1957:17-157). His conception of marriage and the family is similar to Ward's from which it was partly derived. Thomas explained sex roles in terms of biological analogies where the female's "metabolism" is like that of plants, and thus stable and enduring; the male's metabolism is more fitted for motion, feats of strength, and bursts of energy (Thomas, 1897). These complementary characteristics enabled men and women to constitute the functionally necessary units of marriage and family. With regard to female subordination, Thomas saw this as due to "organic conditions" (metabolic rates) and "historical incidents."** Sex differences make it "not conceivable that women should . . . control the activities of society. . . . In view of his superior power of making movements and applying force, the male must inevitably assume control of the life direction of the group" (quoted from Sex and Society, 1907, by Schwendingers, 1971:789).

A central figure in Thomas' career was Ethel Sturgess Dummer, a Chicago philanthropist who commissioned Thomas to write The Unadjusted Girl (1923). Dummer became one of the rare female participants and officers in the American Sociological Society (Deegan, 1981). In 1921, Burgess, as secretary of the society, invited Dummer to organize a panel on "The Delinquent Girl." In 1927, when Thomas was elected president of the society, Dummer was elected to the executive committee. Deegan (1981:20) credits Dummer with founding the ASA section on the family in 1922 (not until 1965 was another woman, Mirra Komarovsky, chair of the ASA family section).

Ernest Burgess (1886-1966) is called the true father of American family sociology. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago under Small and

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*Thomas was dismissed from the University of Chicago in 1918 because he was charged (never convicted) of violating the Mann Act (Deegan, 1981). From 1923-1928, he taught at the New School for Social Research in New York.

**Thomas was fond of comparing women with the so-called "lower races" but he saw race differences as also caused by "different habitats" (Schwendinger's, 1971)

taught at Chicago from 1916 to his retirement in 1951 (Martindale, 1981:239). While Small, Ward, and Thomas all wrote about the family at various times, Burgess was the first to make family sociology his major focus. Moreover, Burgess (with Blumer, Cavan, & Hughes) was part of the initial core of Chicago colleagues who emphasized what was to become symbolic interactionism. This was the Chicago School who called themselves "social psychologists" (see Mullins, 1973: chapter 4). The dual influences of the social problems' orientation of the early Chicago sociologists and the symbolic interactionsism perspective are shown in Burgess' early publication of his research on families with delinquent children (1926). It was here that he defined the family as "a unity of interacting personalities existing chiefly for the development and mutual gratification of its members . . . held together by internal cohesion rather than external pressures." Burgess (with Cottrell) emphasized the importance of complementary "role patterns" in Predicting Success or Failure in Marriage (1939). He claimed the family had moved From Institution to Companionship (1945). Burgess (with Wallin) conducted a pioneering, longitudinal survey research project that was reported in Engagement and Marriage (1953). He was one of the original organizers of The National Council on Family Relations in 1938.

In essence, it appears reasonable to claim that family sociology had its origins in the work of Burgess and his colleagues and in the context of social psychology. The assumption of a basic shift, in family sociology, from an institutional to a social-psychological perspective is not supported by the evidence. There has been a shift from sociologists who theorized about marriage and the family, among other areas, to sociologists who concentrated on the family. The latter were always dominated by a subjectivistic, social psychological, orientation and this legacy has persisted to the present.

But, what about the so-called early "functionalists" in family sociology? Ogburn and Nimkoff offer a somewhat different alternative to the study of society. William Ogburn (1886-1959) received his doctorate at the Columbia University under Giddings. Ogburn received from the Columbia School a strong emphasis on empirical research. His most influential book, Social Change With Respect to Culture and Original Nature, published in 1922, presented his theory of "cultural lag." Ogburn's views of family sociology, however, were influenced both by his tenure at the University of Chicago (1927 until his retirement in 1952) and his collaboration with Nimkoff. Meyer Nimkoff (1904-1965) earned his Ph.D. at Southern California in 1928. He taught at Bucknell University and served as head of the Sociology department at Florida State University from 1950 until his death in 1965. Ogburn and Nimkoff had an unusually fertile collaboration illustrated, for example, in their classic text Sociology (1940). Ogburn was primarily interested in the development of material culture and its effects. Nimkoff, on the other hand, was concerned with the interrelationship of social institutions and he, like Ogburn, considered the economic (material culture) as a major force in this interrelationship. Martindale (1981:297-302) labels Ogburn and Nimkoff as "pluralistic behaviorists": they take cultural (learned) behavior as the primary point of attack on social issues. With regard to the family, Ogburn's influential article, "The family and its functions," emphasized the current predominance of the "personality function" of the family: "those that provide for the mutual adjustments among husbands, wives, parents and children and for the adaptation of each member of the family to the outside world" (1933:661). Nimkoff echoed this theme of the "loss of family functions" and the concommitant increase in the family's "social-psychological" function (1954:395). As Martindale (1981:302) notes, Ogburn and Nimkoff

represented a curious combination of behaviorism with "the incorporation of numerous insights from the symbolic interactionists."

Thus, there was remarkably little controversy or critique among the early founders of family sociology. Recall, that sociologists formed a small, tight-knit group with the American Sociological Association numbering only a few hundred members as late as the 1930's (Mullins, 1973:43). This consensual group of founders formulated the basic assumptions of family sociology that continue to permeate the field today. These assumptions can be summarized as follows.*

The individual is the product of society and culture: i.e., a product of socialization.

Society consists of interdependent institutions.

The family institution is the bastion of social order. Its regulatory forces derive from its influence on the socialization process. Women's place is in the home performing the important tasks of childhood socialization and husband nurturance. Man's place is in the competitive world of work and his family function is to be the "breadwinner."

Social change creates differentiation of social functions.

Family functions have diminished in importance. Specifically, the family has lost its economic function. Its social-psychological function has become of central importance.

The family had changed from institution to companionship. It can be defined as a network of interpersonal relationships. It is integrated by complementary role patterns: especially the complementary roles of husband and wife. These role divisions, in the family, are natural and universal. The family is a psychological relief station from the public world.

Thus, the family sphere is qualitatively different from the public sphere. These are separate realms. There has been a split between public and private.

Marriage preceeds the family. Marital solidarity is the heart of family sociology. Major focii for study concern the prediction of marital success, adjustment, happiness.

The increasing emphasis on the family's "personality function" may cause strains on marriage but, predictably, it will endure.

Marital disorganization can be prevented through education: e.g., preparation for marriage courses.

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*Each of these assumptions can be documented in the works of the previously cited family sociologists. To see them explicitly reflected, refer to the general sociology texts, of the period, on the family (e.g. Sutherland and Woodward, 1937).

Methodologically, the stress should be on quantitative research and scientific objectivity.

Family sociology is different from the general sociology of society because the family world is distinct from the public world. To study the family, one must focus on the interacting individuals within it. These individuals can be studied through questionnaire surveys of their attitudes, values, and belief systems. Since families function homogeneously, usually one member's account of a family process can be used to represent the perceptions of other family members without significant bias.

A racidal-critical view of these assumptions--as reflections of the ideology of the particular historical period and of specific academic networks--should be obvious from the previous section on basic schisms among social theories. In brief, several objections are as follows. The approach emphasizes social regulation at the expense of the individual. To see the individual totally as the product of socialization rules out the possibility of conflict between the individual and society. No account is taken of race, class, sex, ethnic, religious, etc. differences: i.e., the scope is limited to the modern, American, middle-class family (as viewed by male academics). The approach is unduly optimistic: the system may have problems but not contradictions. It exaggerates consensus, ignores conflict and contradiction, and appears to assume everything can be settled with a little education. There is little attempt to address the admittedly difficult question of the interrelationship between the family and society. The question is negated by the substantive emphasis on marriage and the analytic focus on the individual (before, during, or after marriage).

Substantive Applications

In the longer paper, from which this NCFR Workshop presentation is extracted, five substantive areas are delineated as examples of the application of a radical-critical approach to family sociology. Because of space limitations here, I include only an introduction to each of the areas, which contrasts traditional and radical approaches, plus a brief outline of examples of radical-critical approaches to the subject.

Historical Totality Versus Public-Private Dichotomy

A pervasive assumption in family sociology, is that families are natural (biological) units that can be understood in relative isolation from social institutions. More specifically, it is assumed that private family life (as a haven or retreat) is dualistically opposed to the ruthless and alienating world of public life. Radical-critics claim that the basic assumption of a public-private dichotomy has limited family research and theory from the time of its inception.

A major premise of the radical-critical perspective is that social systems must be viewed in their historic totality: i.e., that social explanation must be historical and historically specific. Further, the methodological implications of the analysis of totality requires that we try to show that what appears as "natural" or "universal" actually rests on socially produced conditions. The radical-critic asserts that the insistence on viewing the family as an isolated

retreat from society is ideology: i.e., that it precludes questions of how the family mirrors and supports other institutions (such as economic and political) and, in turn, is supported by them. This ideology serves a number of functions such as: it obscures the economic function of the family and, thus, a realistic view of the operations of capitalism; it places ultimate responsibility on the family for the "personal" needs of individuals and, thus, relieves obligations and questionings of other institutions; and it serves as a basic justification of a "natural" split between male and female worlds. The assumption of a public-private dichotomy can be attacked from either a critical perspective (which emphasizes ideology and consciousness) or a radical-structural focus (which stresses the overlap of structures) or both. As is noted in my review, both approaches appear in the current literature.

Examples. Four heuristic attempts to demonstrate, historically, the complex interplay between society and the family are reviewed. (1) Donzelot (1979): focuses on the changing nature of socio-political control over families in France; maps out, over the last two centuries the merging of public and private into the modern "hybrid" family. (2) Lasch (1977): documents ways that the family has been "beseiged," over the past century, by the interventionism into family life on the part of "social services" in health, education, and welfare. (3) Zaretsky (1976): traces the history of the development of the ideology, that family and economy are separate realms, from the rise and decline of the bourgeoisie family to the contemporary proletarianization of the family. (4) Kanter (1977, 1978): delineates the history of the relationship of the family to the development of the American capitalist-industrial system; details the manner that family enterprises operated within organizations; discusses the extent that occupational events intrude into the contemporary family.

The Politics of Sexuality

Perhaps no other substantive area in sociology is surrounded by a greater aura of "privatization" than is human sexuality. Thus, traditionally, sociologists have approached the area very cautiously. First, the sociology of human sexuality has been limited in scope and almost totally relegated to the area of family sociology. This further privatizes sexuality plus it creates a dualism between "marital" sex (normative) and "premarital" or "extramarital" sex (deviant). Moreover, sex research, in family sociology, has been for the last several decades marked by a singular preoccupation with quantitative analysis of survey, questionnaire data on "premarital sexual permissiveness" (see the decade reviews by Cannon and Long of the 1960s, and by Clayton and Bokemeier of the 1970s). Thus, a large proportion of our information on human sexuality is concerned with what the field defines as deviant while the treatment of adult sexuality in marriage is virtually nonexistent (cf. articles in Journal of Marriage and the Family and in texts of family sociology). The only apparent rationale for this imbalance is that marital sex is considered dull or, stated more in accordance with family texts, sex declines in salience after marriage (cf. critique by Miller and Fowlkes, 1980).

To the radical-critic, nowhere is the gap between the everyday world as experienced and the sociological world as theorized so apparent as in the area of sexuality (Morgan, 1975:171). Essentially, critics assert that the field is dominated by male sociologists and that despite efforts toward "scientific objectivity," male norms (which Laws, 1979:229, calls a "phallocentric worldview" on the subject) intrude on both data collection and interpretation. For one example, there is a myopia in the sex permissiveness research as to how power relations operate to

define and to restrict female sexuality. In capsule, radical-critics claim that contemporary research on human sexuality is: atheoretical (primarily descriptive and in isolation from other social systems); ahistorical (with the assumption that existing relations in American society are "normal"); and, reductionistic (sexuality reduced to physical behavior and highly abstracted from the social and interactional setting).

Examples. Illustrations of radical-critical approaches to the sociology of sexuality are summarized in three subsections.

(1) Sexuality as identity (socialization approach): poses basic questions as to the social construction of human sexuality (by family, school, media, etc.) in contrast to the traditional approach, in family sociology, of quantifying and/or attributing psychological attitudes, values, motivations of sexual behavior (Red Collective, 1978; Person, 1980; Chodorow, 1978).

(2) Sexuality as ideology (comparative and historical approach): compares variations in sexual imagery in the development of the major world religions (Carmody, 1979; Ruether, 1974; Sanday, 1976; etc.), analyzes historical variations in views on sexuality and women's reproductive rights (Barker-Benfield, 1978; Janeway, 1980; Petchesky, 1980; Gordon, 1976, etc.).

(3) Sexuality as power (political-economic approach): examines the radical thesis that the basis of women's subordination in society lies in male control over female sexuality (Rich, 1980); links sexual abuse and harassment of women to male hostility and attempts to dominate rather than to male sex interest or sex drive (Johnson, 1980; Diamond, 1980; Barry, 1979).

Demystification of Motherhood and Housework

An integral part of the assumption of the "privatized" family is the mystification of women's family roles. As a consequence, family researchers have virtually ignored the areas--which most of us experience as central to the family--of motherhood and housework. In mainstream family sociology, the analyses of motherhood and housework are written off as trivial as well as invariant and, thus, not suitable focii for social theory or research.

From a radical-critical perspective, Smith (1974) starts with the obvious fact that the reason women's experiences in the home are ignored or denigrated, in the family literature, is because these are marginal areas for male sociologists. Smith explains that social theory is a product developed by males who experience the world in particular ways because of their own locations in the social structure. The perceptions of contemporary sociologists are shaped especially by the rational, administrative structures of academia in a capitalist society and they apply that framework to all structures and experiences in the society (note, the current popularity of "exchange" theory). In proposing an alternative, Smith calls for a sociology for women which allows women to participate in the development of the framework used for knowing reality, rather than a sociology of women which takes women as objects to be studied. Such a perspective would begin with inquiries into how the everyday world is experienced by women as described by women, rather than the usual attempt to squeeze women's experience into preexisting models (the rational, administrative framework in particular). Essential to this perspective, as Glazer-Malbin (1976:922) underscores, "is that the subsequent steps involve connecting the everyday world as seen by women, to the larger social context, to

the political economy." Such a sociological approach should illuminate the range of structures that impinge upon women's lives and ultimately shape their experiences.

Examples. Two subsections discuss radical-critical approaches to motherhood and to housework.

(1) Motherhood. The review covers an historical study of childbirth and rearing in the working-class of 19th century England (Davies, 1978); a social history of birth control in America (Gordon, 1976); the rise of eugenics, gynecology, and population programs (Barker-Benfield, 1978; Tangri, 1976); reflexive analyses of maternity and a new emphasis on the mother-daughter bond (Rich, 1976; Shaw, 1974; Chodorow, 1974; etc.).

(2) Housework. Included are studies on three themes. First, housework as part of the maintenance of a particular political-economy (Glazer-Malbin, 1976; Hartmann, 1981). Second, the ideology of housework and its historic development as an integral part of the culture of society (Laws, 1979: Oakley, 1974; Davidoff, 1976). Third, the legitimation of housework as "women's work" (Stacey & Price, 1981; Bell & Newby 1976; etc.).

The Dialectic of Patriarchy and Capitalism

The question of how power relations in the family (wife-mother subordination) interact with power relations in the economy (female job discrimination) is the focus of a considerable amount of radical-critical scholarship. The work of radical feminists on the subject, with particular emphasis on female job segregation, increased exponentially in the 1970s. This section contrasts the radical-critical approach with traditional sociological perspectives and summarizes several of the major points of the critics.

Traditionally, family sociology treated the relationship of the family and the economy from a Parsonian functionalist perspective: male as wage earner and female as homemaker (cf. Bell and Vogel, 1968). Women's participation in the labor market was conceptualized as "wife-mother" employment and viewed from a "social problem" orientation (cf. Rallings and Nye, 1979). Thus, research on "working wives" was characterized by questions concerning the effects of mothers' working on the stability of marriage and the family, on children, and on the well-being of the mothers. In essence, the assumption was that the consequence of women's departure from their "natural" roles would be negative on husbands, children (and, undoubtedly, the women themselves). As women increasingly entered the labor force (and as academia became aware of affirmative action), family sociologists altered their focus to the analysis of a predicted correlation between wives' labor force participation and "power" relations in the family. Such power relations have been viewed primarily in terms of the potential social-psychological gains in "resources" of a working wife vis-a-vis her husband (cf. McDonald's 1980, decade review).

In sum, at least three basic assumptions have dominated family sociology's treatment of women in the labor force: (1) women only recently became an important part of the economic production in society; (2) with increased economic participation, female status (power) increases; and (3) with increased economic participation, wives become less (and husbands become more) involved in the family. Radical-critics

in presenting evidence that undermines each of these assumptions (summed in three subsections) claim that family sociological treatment of the topic is: ahistorical and insufficiently comparative (across cultures, classes, and ethnic-racial groups); ideological (applying an American, middle-class, male model and emphasizing "exchange" values while denigrating "use" values); and, dualistic (narrowly focusing on internal family dynamics as a separate--private--realm from the public realm of the economy).

Examples. Three subsections deal with the radical-critical treatment of the traditional assumptions about the division of labor by sex--in family and in economy.

(1) Comparative-historical researchers demonstrate that women have always (from preindustrial societies through the present) played an important part in economic production (Sanday, 1973; Middleton, 1979; Hartmann, 1979; Marglin, 1976; Martin, 1981; etc.).

(2) Likewise, comprative-historical data show that female status (or power), in the home or the society, does not vary by the amount of productive work that they perform nor the proportion of their economic contribution relative to males (Blumberg, 1978; Sanday, 1981; etc.). Further, contemporary data provide evidence that (in America) while female labor force participation has greatly increased, there has been no upgrading (on the average) in female offupational statuses nor any improvement in incomes (Szymanski, 1976; Roby, 1972; Sokoloff, 1980; etc.)

(3) With regard to employed spouses' relative involvement in the family, time-budget studies demonstrate that, regardless of the country, employed married women work longer hours (job plus home) than employed married men do (Szalai, 1972; Boulding, 1976; Lapidus, 1978; etc.). In a comprehensive review of time-budget studies in American families, there is no evidence that husbands of employed wives, are increasing the time spent on housework or childcare (Hartmann, 1981). Radical-critics view the contradiction between job and family demands as a fissure that holds the potential for radical social change.

The Reproduction of Inequality: Family and Stratification Systems

The topic of social stratification--social class, power, and status--lies at the very core of radical-critical theory. Traditionally, stratification has been recognized as an important aspect of family sociology (cf. Goode, 1959; Parsons, 1955). The fact that family structure and processes are highly associated with family position in the stratification systems is almost a sociological truism (Otto, 1975:315). However, family sociology has contributed little to the sociology of stratification and has accepted, from it, a basically functionalist approach to stratification. Further, family sociologists have focused on social class (with little reference to status) and have been content to describe family variations by class without critical analysis and without any focus on power.

A radical-critical approach, on the other hand, direcrs attention to at least three major directions for family theory. First, the need to ask about family power in a structural sense: i.e., how does the family perpetuate inequality (rather than the preoccupation with who has the "power" within the family). Second, the need to reexamine traditional assumptions with regard to the conceptualization and measurement of family status. Third, the need to investigate what part the family plays in the legitimation of inequality, and how the family is used in the perpetuation of the ideology of inequality.

Examples. Three subsections discuss radical-critical approaches to family power, family status, and the question of legitimation.

(1) Family power. Radical-critics offer evidence that families perpetuate, over generations, social class position as well as construct and maintain the status identities of their members (Haller, 1981). Family power elites continue to maintain a stronghold on American corporate organizations (Kanter, 1978; Domhoff, 1970; Barnes & Hershow, 1976; etc.).

(2) Family status. The measurement of family social status solely on the basis of the husband's occupation is under attack from many directions (Huber, 1976; Acker, 1980; Delphy, 1981; etc.). The related question of how to bring women (and other minorities) into stratification theory is explored (Oppenheimer, 1977; Sokoloff, 1980; etc.). Suggested, also, is the need to measure family status in other than purely economic terms (Safilios-Rothschild, 1975; Papanek, 1979).

(3) Legitimation. Two major contributions are reviewed. From a critical perspective, Della Fave (1980) examines the process by which the stratification structure of the larger society becomes internalized in individual consciousness. From a radical-structuralist viewpoint, Janus (1977) analyzes the role of the mass media in the legitimation of stratification (with specific emphasis on sex stratification).

Conclusion

In recent years a number of social scientists have begun to study various aspects of the family from a radical-critical perspective. The critique that has evolved has been wide-ranging but has developed, and been reported, largely outside the traditional boundaries of family sociology. This paper attempted to open-up radical-critical theory to family sociologists and to demonstrate that behind the rather scathing critique of mainstream family sociology also lies a unique and heuristic approach to the understanding of marriage and the family.

The paper first examined the origins of critical theory and radical structuralism. These approaches were then viewed within a four-fold classification of social theories. The purpose of this introduction was to underscore both the complementarity of radical structuralism and critical theory and the opposition of these perspectives to many assumptions of traditional social theories. In spelling out, in some detail, the ontologic, epistemologic, etc. assumptions of these theories, the concern was to emphasize their individuality. My argument is that there is no short-cut to the application of any theory. It is a real necessity to ground the perspective in the philosophical and sociological assumptions from which it derives. In a parallel sense, there is no way to incorporate (merge, integrate) one theory with theories based on diammetrically opposed assumptions. Such a fusion would not do justice to the respective foundations and problematics from which the approaches derive and, further, it would demand a dilution of their tenets and, as a predictable consequence, a misunderstanding of their very nature. This should not be construed as a limitation of social theories but, rather, as an opportunity to select among several distinct theoretical positions. Thus, one of the major conclusions prompted by my journey through various contemporary social theories is that family sociologists face a number of viable alternatives to the subject.

The paper traced the legacy of family sociology to its founders and extracted a number of basic assumptions that continue to dominate much of the field. The final section attempted to illustrate radical-critical approaches to five broad, substantive areas in family sociology. The examples of radical-critical research and theorizing, in these areas, are primarily from scholars who are not family sociologists. As yet, there is no integrated radical-critical approach to the multi-faceted domain of family sociology. However, in attempting to organize examples, for substantive applications, it was apparent that radical-critics are united on certain fundamental criticisms of conventional family sociology and, to some extent, on suggestions for alternative approaches. The articulation of these critiques and suggestions may provide some guidelines for the future development of a radical-critical family sociology.

Fundamental Critiques of Conventional Family Sociology

1. Family sociology is locked into a social-psychological approach. It is basically unaware of the crucial importance of macro-societal factors external to the family.

2. Family theorists, consciously or unconsciously, play an active role in women's subordination.

3. Family sociology ignores scholarship in other areas within sociology (with the exception of social psychology), in disciplines outside of sociology, and in theory and research produced outside of the United States.

4. It is ahistorical and non-comparative.

5. It is static: it emphasizes social regulation; exaggerates consensus and homogeneity.

6. It is basically empiricist: it treats the world of appearances as the only world. It takes the individual as the unit of analysis.

7. Its recurrent attempts to derive theory, on the basis of reviewing and summarizing research publications, are sterile.

Guidelines toward a Radical-Critical Family Sociology

1. Radical-critical sociology would start with the basic assumption that families are social products (social structures or social organizations) and proceed to study the mutual interpenetration with other social structures. It would deprivatize the family. Analysis would shift from exploring relationships within the family to asking how these relations are influenced by structures outside the family. It would politicize the family. Particular attention would be given to how the political-economy, in its historic setting, affects family organization and processes. In capsule, it would expand a radical sociology of the family as a complement to the conventional social-psychology of the family.

2. It would take gender seriously. Analysts would recognize that the division of labor by sex lies at the foundation of the family and the economy of the majority of contemporary societies. Thus, considerations of gender would be emphasized from the point of view of scholarship and, further, in the light of ethical and political ramifications.

3. It would be alert to the potential application of theories, however remote from the specific substance of marriage and the family, that deal with structural organization, power hierarchies, developmental processes, etc. It would expand its international consciousness and place high priority on cross-national research.

4. It would add an historical dimension to any proposition about marriage and family. It would compare and contrast family differences by race, social class, ethnic, religious, gender composition, etc. rather than limit its scope to the modern, American, middle-class family.

5. It would be dynamic and conceive of all social structures, including the family, as processes which contain the interplay of contradictory forces, which can result in disorganization and radical change.

6. It would seek to peel back the surface layers of appearances, to unmask the reifications of the everyday world; to recognize and understand the factors that make people define social reality in certain ways. It would avoid methodological individualism and analyze networks of interaction as the smallest unit of analysis.

7. It would attempt to develop theories that are of practical and political relevance. Rather than offer empirically based theoretical descriptions of the family status quo, such theories would elaborate a counter definition of social reality. It would explicate the problems and contradictions in the way the present system functions, underscore oppressive institutional arrangements, and detail alternative structures that promise to maximize human potential. Moreover, radical-critical theory would be committed to the development of practical strategies to join theory with praxis.

(In the longer paper, these suggestions are further elaborated. As is, perhaps, obvious from the critique and guidelines, it is easier to find inconsistancies in the established field than to construct an internally consistent radical-critical family sociology. These are elements of an embryonic approach that requires its own history before final evaluation.)

In conclusion, a combination of critical theory and radical structuralism offers a new frontier for family sociologists: critical theory because it sensitizes us to the process of everyday theory construction, to the ideologies that mold human consciousness, and to the fact that all theories are political; radical structuralism because it alerts us to the powerful influence of social structures, to the contradictions inherent in their interrelationship, and to the necessity for historical-comparative perspectives. At the onset, a radical-critical approach requires that its proponents believe in the possibility of radical social change.

> "One can't believe impossible things," said Alice in Wonderland.
> "I daresay you haven't had much practice," replied the Queen.
> "When I was your age I did it for half an hour a day. Why sometimes I believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

It will provide a good exercise for family sociologists. Most possible things were thought to be impossible at some time.

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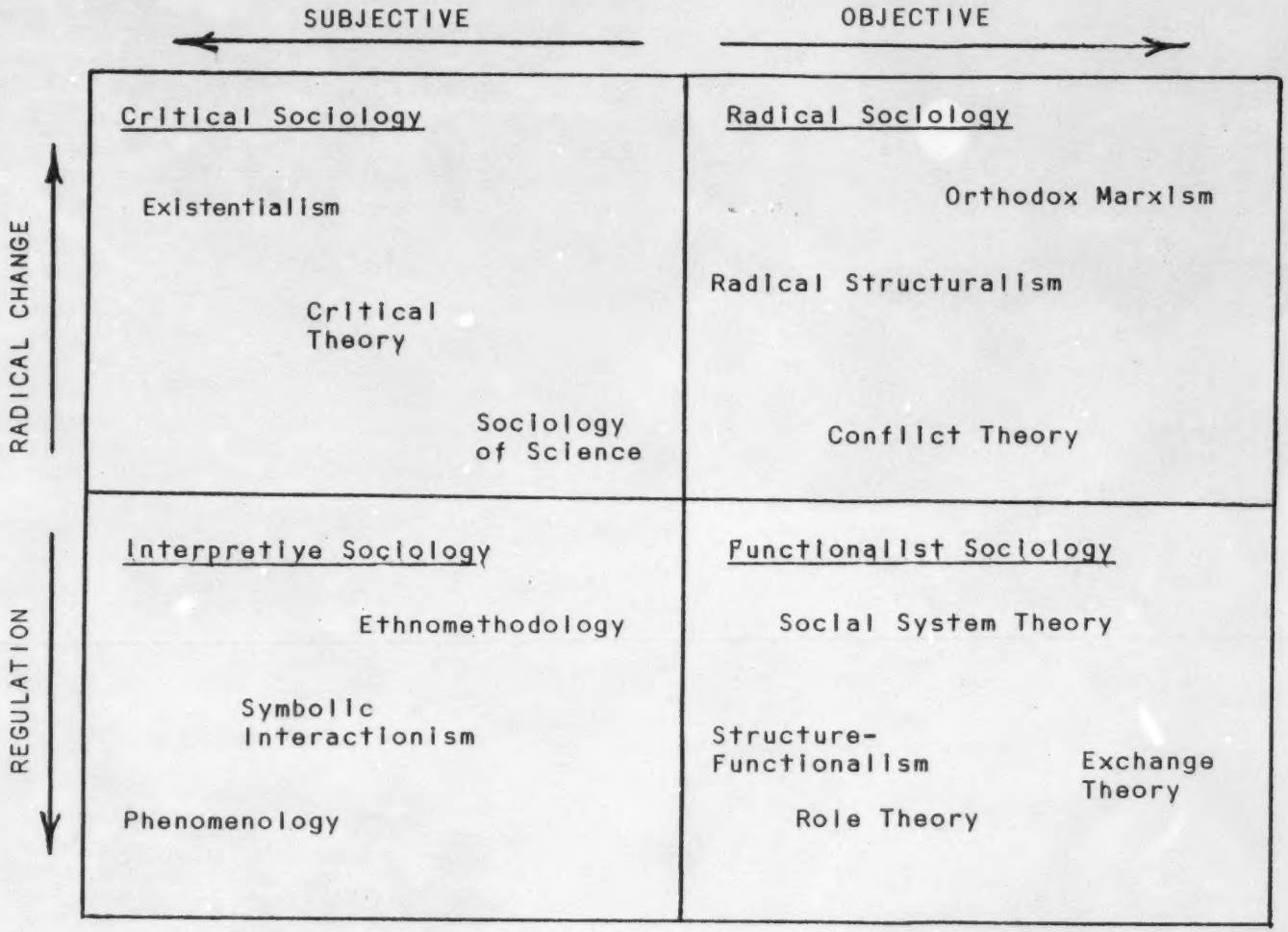
TABLE 1: THEORETICAL SCHISMS IN ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND THE NATURE OF SOCIETY*



*This is a modification of a model developed by Burrell and Morgan (1979).